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SOLDIER POETS

SECOND SERIES

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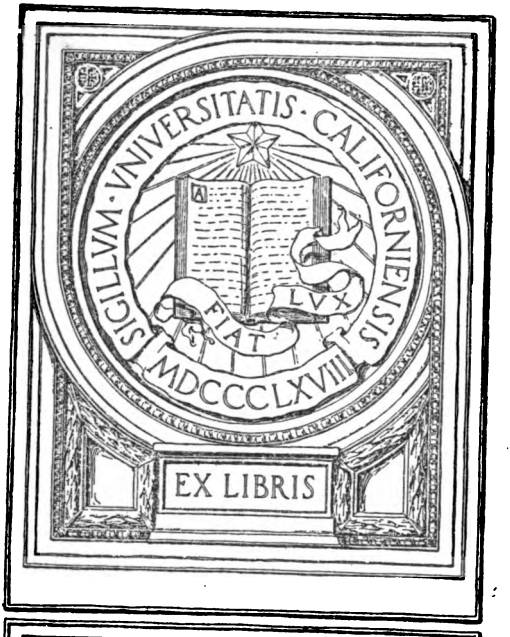

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MORE SONGS BY THE FIGHTING MEN

"Over 40 poets contribute to this collection, the second of a series from the same publisher, and all we can say of it is that it is wonderful. Hardly a name is known to us, yet the poetry is of such sincerity and dignity as to fill us with equal humility and pride—humility in the presence of thought so unselfish, pride that our land can give birth to sons so true. All branches of the Service are represented, but the one spirit is in all: there is not a trivial thing in the book. These poets do not love war, but with singular oneness they see the blood-red path before them clear and shining, and tread it with a holy joy. We advise everyone to get, read, and ponder over the book. In it beauty and high purpose go hand in hand, and every other page is an inspiration."

Glasgow Herald.

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MORE SONGS BY THE FIGHTING MEN

SOLDIER POETS: SECOND SERIES

1919
NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S

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Preface

AN Introduction to this second series of "Soldier Poets" is superfluous. What was said by way of Foreword to the original volume is equally true of its successor. There is the less need for repetition because that original Introduction and the poems that followed have been the text of many articles, sermons, and speeches, including an address by the President of the Board of Education, who allows us to paraphrase his remarks on the characteristic features, already noted, of the remarkable outburst of lyrical poetry from the seat of war. The poems are remarkedly individual, he pointed out: they are entirely free from hate and execration. There is no reviling of the enemy. Our young soldiers look to poetry as a deliverance from the grim necessities of the hour rather than as a means of expressing martial emotion. They do not gush concerning patriotism, but they feel it none the less, and express it soberly, seriously, and with intense conviction.

The same characteristics, the same yearning over the beloved country left behind and of tender feeling for parents and home, are found in all the poems that have come to us from men in the fighting forces since the former volume was collected. And here we may repeat, that while these volumes are typical of the lyrical efflorescence of the fighting men, they do not pretend to be exhaustive: the larger task of sifting already published work and compiling a more complete anthology has been undertaken by a devoted advocate of the significance of the soldier poets' work and its claim to recognition.

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We builded better than we knew when we issued the original volume as the climax of our proud association with the soldier poets: it was a greater thing than we were then aware of. No literary work of our day has possessed so much genetic force or been of greater influence. It was well said that "Soldier Poets" was of greater service to the Allied cause in America than many Blue Books and specially prepared statements: it showed the high clean spirit of ardent, generous youth engaged on a new Crusade. These songs before sunrise gave fresh vitality to poetry and were welcomed by a nation on the eve of rebirth as the promise of a greater intensity of living, a finer perception of beauty, a clearer vision of the undying splendour after the weary days in which life and art had become dreary and meaningless to the multitude. Now the birth-throes have become more severe, the spiritual quickening more accentuated, more and more of the poems are personal threnodies, and the sentinel graves of the *Poetry Review* young men who responded to the call in 1914 now consecrate the long line from Nieuport to Basra. They are a more glorious and more numerous company than the Elizabethans, with whom, in the great comradeship beyond the grave, they still march, an invisible army, with their brothers-in-arms who continue the material and spiritual warfare here in the flesh, inspiring and directing the fight that will not end with the war.

GALLOWAY KYLE.

"THE POETRY REVIEW,"
LONDON, W.C.
All Saints' Day, 1917.

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ERIC DE BANZIE

SAPPER, R.E.

The Gift

"OH, I have known the dreams of youth . . .
then what
The dead, long, useless years gave promise of;
Remnants I'll humbly gift thee—all I've got,
Which thy sweet thanks shall be the solace of."
Thus spake a restless mind all out of tune
With souls and thoughts the world could offer
him. . . .
Thou know'st he thanked Thee, God, for War's
grand boon—
The end, the glory, England proffered him.
The sorrow of his going matters not;
Only the fierce high glow that in his heart
Lit up those remnants that a rifle shot
Filched from an England who was grieved to part.
Alway, the nobleness that England gives
Rescinds her royal gift—so England lives!

FRANCE.

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PAUL BEWSHER

D.S.C., Sub-Lieut., R.N.A.S., France

The Dawn Patrol

SOMETIMES I fly at dawn above the sea,
Where, underneath, the restless waters flow—
Silver, and cold, and slow.
Dim in the east there burns a new-born sun,
Whose rosy gleams along the ripples run,
Save where the mist droops low,
Hiding the level loneliness from me.

And now appears beneath the milk-white haze
A little fleet of anchored ships, which lie
In clustered company,
And seem as they are yet fast bound by sleep,
Although the day has long begun to peep,
With red-inflamèd eye,
Along the still, deserted ocean ways.

The fresh, cold wind of dawn blows on my face
As in the sun's raw heart I swiftly fly,
And watch the seas glide by.

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Scarce human seem I, moving through the skies,
And far removed from warlike enterprise—
  Like some great gull on high
Whose white and gleaming wings beat on through space.

Then do I feel with God quite, quite alone,
High in the virgin morn, so white and still,
  And free from human ill:
My prayers transcend my feeble earth-bound plaints—
As though I sang among the happy Saints
  With many a holy thrill—
As though the glowing sun were God's bright Throne.

My flight is done. I cross the line of foam
That breaks around a town of grey and red,
  Whose streets and squares lie dead
Beneath the silent dawn—then am I proud
That England's peace to guard I am allowed;
  Then bow my humble head,
In thanks to Him Who brings me safely home.

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COLLIN BROOKS

SERGEANT, MACHINE GUN CORPS

To Another Poor Poet

SHALL God forget these darkling years we spend
In poverty and misery and toil
Unlit save by a glint of faëry spoil
That gleams and leads us, steadfast, to His end,
The darkling years when only Hope is friend
To Courage who, from where our foes embroil,
Still calls us onward—onward tho' the soil
Engulf both us and all that we defend?

The spoken word holds true: the swords we wield
Upended show the Cross that, potent yet,
Shall prove each wound we suffer on the field
No sacrifice made vainly to abet
A senseless purpose. Wait but for the yield
Of all our toil and—God shall not forget.

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CARROLL CARSTAIRS

LIEUT., GRENADIER GUARDS

Death in France

IF I should die while I am yet in France
Before the battle clouds have rolled away,
Give me to feel that death will but enhance
Life's secret vision on its passing day.
Grant then to me new, individual power
In reverie, whilst whimsically I trace
Thro' eager, breathless youth, each pulsing hour,
The light and shadow on its fading face.
And in death's soonest minute let me seek
Life heightened by new splendour, poise, surprise,
New colour flushing deep its paling cheek,
New wonder looking from its tired eyes.
Time's brought a rare patine to old Romance—
Death has an ancient dignity in France.

FRANCE, *November*, 1916.

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The Lover's Mood

I SAID a careless word, then miserably
Repented, asked forgiveness in sweet rhyme;
Your face had clouded so, and suddenly
The day had grown a-weary ere her time.

Life and Death

IF death should come with his cold, hasty kiss
Along the trench or in the battle strife,
I'll ask of death no greater boon than this:
That it shall be as wonderful as life.

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ERNEST K. CHALLENGER

CORPORAL, R.E.

The Harvest

SHADOWLESS lies the land
Under the sun,
Only the poplars stand
With moveless boughs in the heat
That broods o'er the blackened wheat
And the ground so hardly won.

No other tree in the waste.
They only stand
Where the straight white road is traced
Athwart the land.
And ever under the sky
Do the slow-winged birds go by—
The slow black birds of prey
That wait but the close of day
For the night to bring them food.

The curse of the heat is here,
And the curse of blood.
Cold-lipped, and with eyes of fear,
'Neath the sun's flood

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Wanders the spirit of death;
And e'en in the burning noon is an icy breath
And the red of the west is to me like the redness of
blood.

The village is still as the heat,
From the ruined houses start
The rats across the street.—
There is never another sound,
For the guns are silent to-day,
And the endless lines of men that are bound
For the place of death and the nameless mound
Have taken another way.

At the end of the ruined street
Roodless the church yet stands
To the God men praise with their lips
While they mock Him with their hands;
With hands that have scrawled for sport
Their jests on the altar-stone,
And their ribald words on the lips of Christ,
The marred Christ hanging alone.

Who has measured pain,
And who has a plumb for that sea
Where the soul shall know again
Its own immensity?

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For the voice of the mind is dumb,
But the voice of the soul is heard,
Where the wild dark waters are come
And the face of man's sky is blurred.

Who shall say " Lo here
Shall the glory of war be found,
That a nation arose without fear
And smote her foe to the ground
For the wrong that he dared to dream,
And the hell that he wrought on earth ;
That she pressed after Honour's gleam
Though it led to a land of dearth " ?

Who has measured wrong,
And who shall assign it a bond ?
Where the scornful might of the strong
And the cry of the weak be found—
Say, is the tale complete ?
Ah ! myriad wrongs spring up
Where one has set its feet,
And the earth is a poisoned cup
Where the goodly wine brings death,
And one drop of venom there
Shall poison the very breath
Of the winds in the upper air.

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What of the men who died
Stout-hearted and steadfast-eyed
For the good they might not share
And the goal to them denied?
For the lamp they strove to bear
Should light another's way,
And the boon that they might not share
Is the boon we hold to-day.

What of the god-like men
Who lie in the dust to-day
For the dreams that we hold so light
And the hope that we fling away?
Ah! shall we not vex their sleep,
We men of the lesser mould,
Who sully the name they bled to keep,
And the honour they died to hold?

A thousand ages ago
Man fought with the axe of stone
That the many might seize the thing they loved
From the few, and hold it alone.
For the will of the strong was law
And the right of the weak was death
When man was one with the beasts of the earth
And battled with them for breath.

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And to-day with their coward lips
Men prate of love in their creeds,
And a thousand times to-day
Do they spurn her with their deeds.
For we talk of the law of truth
While our God is the law of might,
And the will of the strongest there
Is the thing we hold as right.

What have we gained with the years,
But the greater power to lie?
We, who speak of the truth,
Smooth-voiced and with side-long eye;
Better the axe of stone
And the feet on the weakest throat
Than the lying lips and the coward thrust
And the stealthy eyes that gloat.

Now for the one's desire
Shall the many be crucified
On the cross of a lawless power
With the nails of a soulless pride.
And the wrong goes deeper yet,
Aye, deep as the springs of life,
And has blossomed out at the 'hest of pride
In the deadly flower of strife.

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And nothing shall purge the land
Where the curse of sin has stood
But the purge of the whetted steel
And the drench of blood.
While perchance at the end shall Peace
Her impotent pinions spread
O'er the ruined home and the smoking land
And the blank eyes of our dead.

Hark!—through the lazy air
Comes the sound of guns again.
Once more man reaps with a sickle of fire
The harvest of the slain.

Pont d'Essars, France.

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ERIC CHILMAN

PRIVATE, EAST YORKS

After-days

WHEN the last gun has long withheld
Its thunder, and its mouth is sealed,
Strong men shall drive the furrow straight
On some remembered battlefield.

Untroubled they shall hear the loud
And gusty driving of the rains,
And birds with immemorial voice
Sing as of old in leafy lanes.

The stricken, tainted soil shall be
Again a flowery paradise—
Pure with the memory of the dead
And purer for their sacrifice.

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A. NEWBERRY CHOYCE

LIEUT., LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

Supermen

SOME souls there are
Who in their trial hours
Bathe in the very blood
Which flows around the heart of Life,
And know its joy—and know its agony.
Daring to follow impulse
That any God Himself would not resist.

Stand back!
You weaklings of the world
Boasting the name of men.
Preening yourselves
And judging with your
"God this——" and "God that——"
Dare not to come
Near these.

Stay with your narrow Gods
Who smugly sit
Within four chapel walls
On Sundays,

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You in some stiff God's house
Who kneel and shiver
Towards a judgment day
Of your own setting.

But if a Destiny too kind
Bring you for one short second
Closer to wisdom;
To the breathing hills and spaces
Where my God lives
And makes His Throne in every leaf and flower
And whispers in each wind,
Then I will tell you this—
That my God is so great
I doubt if He will dare
To judge these souls.

Reincarnation

I LOVED you in Babylon.
Sweet Heart! you were a dancer then
And I watched where your little feet
Just stirred the dust within the market-place.
You passed me slow and down the sunlit street,
I saw the longing in the eyes of men

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Who caught the smile which glorified your face.
A moment—little heart !—and you were gone ;
But where you passed—you knew it not—
I marked and kissed the spot.

I loved you in royal Rome.
Sweet Heart ! you were a vestal there
And I came to offer my gift.
A poor slave with a pigeon dearly bought,
Its feathers purer than snow's whitest drift.
With fevered soul I made my silent prayer
Though I could never touch the bliss I sought,
While holy Vesta's temple was your home.
A feather fell—how should you see ?—
Till death it stayed with me.

I love you in London town.
Sweet Heart ! you are a princess now
And the blue blood runs in your veins ;
While I, alas ! am but of common birth
Whom war is splashing with its crimson stains.
A soldier who has taken Honour's vow
To share the grandest task on God's wide earth.
One night you wore red roses in your gown.
A petal dropped—you never guessed—
I hid it in my breast.

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So shall I still love on.
Sweet Heart! your soul was close to me
When the world's first dreams were made.
We two were whispering love at God's own side
Or ever sunlight on the mountains played.
And through a wilderness of worlds I see
A time when reunited we shall glide
Unto the Soul of souls, the Perfect One.
Pass, life or lives! you'll understand
When Love gives me your hand.

Loss

THE world went blind to-day
Groping with shattered faith.
And in the lonely awful night
Madness stalked, taunting me.
The gibbering ghoulish wraith
Of dreams unrealised
Sprang up and mocked my way;
Just that in one wild spot beyond the sea,
A dear heart that I prized
Passed to the Silent Light.

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They say his soul lives on—
That I shall find
Him safe in God's eternity.
To-night, to-night, this aching in my breast,
This wildness in my mind
Cries to the farthest cruel star :—
" O Thou to Whom his soul has gone,
Spare me his lips love-prest !
In this pained night eternity is far—
God ! give his dear warm body back to me."

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REGINALD F. CLEMENTS

2ND LIEUT., ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT

Immortality

I MAY not wait to hear
What says the wind that sweeps across the lea,
And yet I know it speaks, and in its voice
There is some word to make my heart rejoice,
Some message speeding on eternally
That God has not made clear!

I may not wait to find
The secret of the seething sea that flows
Nor ever rests; yet must there be some plan
Above the most exalted thought of man,
Some destiny that none but Heaven knows,
And Heaven keeps me blind!

I may not wait to know
The secret of the towering mountain height
That makes my little self so small and frail
And bids me rest awhile behind the veil,
Because so far beyond it shines the light
And God would have it so!

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I may not wait; I see
The hosts of Righteousness go forth to slay
The armies of a people that would turn
From all that makes man's nobler soul to burn,
And yet I feel as now I take my way
My Immortality!

Finis Coronat Opus

THOUGH I have lived as one whose soul is dead
Nor ever touched my heart-strings to awake.
Some harmony of love that else had fled
From where diviner semblance it might take;
Though I have scorned to hear when there has called
The sterner voice within that bade me rise
And spurn the sloth that held my will enthralled
And veiled my loftier vision to the skies;

This of my slumbering spirit I entreat,
That when I fall and may not rise again,
Or ever this faint heart no more shall beat,
And I have lost the stimulant of pain,
That I some vestige of renown may leave—
Some flower to which posterity may cleave.

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LEONARD NIELL COOK

M.C., 2ND LIEUT., ROYAL LANCS REGT.

(A Rugby and Oxford boy. Killed in action July 7, 1917)

Plymouth Sound

OBEDIENT to the echoed harbour gun
The homing traffic on the water's breast
Fold up their tawny wings and take their rest.
The pale-eyed stars already one by one
Steal softly forth to look upon the sun,
So proudly parting. While from island-nest,
Deep-shadowed cove, torn slope, or purple crest,
All things give praise to God in unison.

Then, brothers—for the time is very near
When I, the youngest floweret of the heath,
Will open in the gloomy courts of Fear,
Perchance to crown the pallid brow of Death—
Oh let me, clinging to the greensward here,
Drink in God's quietness with every breath.

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GERALD M. COOPER

2ND LIEUT., SCOTS GUARDS

Sonnets

I

WEARY of strife and sickening at the thought
My soul desires release, and as I gaze
Upon the barrenness that war hath wrought,
Another vision rises in a haze
Of phantasy—I see a place of rest
All bathed in sunlight and the scent of flowers,
Where Time has fall'n asleep on Nature's breast,
And none may mark the tread of passing hours.
And in the fairest part of all, that seems
The very home of all things pure and good,
A woman sits with half-closed eyes, and dreams
In ecstasy of perfect motherhood.
O wondrous mystery! Behold, the earth
Blossoms again in mystic second birth.

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II

A dark grey sky that merges in the west
Into pale primrose, where the fading day
Still lingers like an echo half-expressed
Of some forgotten glory. By the way,
Outlined in black against the sky, there stands
A wayside crucifix among the corn;
Waiting with tired eyes and outstretched hands,
In patient expectation of the morn.

The gentle whisper of the poplar trees
Is hardly loud enough to break the spell
Of mystic silence. From the church tower's height
Comes, wafted onward by the dying breeze,
The solemn tolling of a single bell;
Then silence and the mystery of night.

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LESLIE COULSON

SERGT., LONDON REGIMENT, R.F.

(Died of Wounds in France, October, 1916)

"—But a Short Time to Live"

OUR little hour,—how swift it flies
When poppies flare and lilies smile;
How soon the fleeting minute dies,
Leaving us but a little while
To dream our dream, to sing our song,
To pick the fruit, to pluck the flower,
The Gods—They do not give us long,—
One little hour.

One little hour,—how short it is
When Love with dew-eyed loveliness
Raises her lips for ours to kiss
And dies within our first caress.
Youth flickers out like wind-blown flame,
Sweets of to-day to-morrow sour,
For Time and Death relentless claim
Our little hour.

Our little hour,—how short a time
To wage our wars, to fan our hates,

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To take our fill of armoured crime,
  To troop our banners, storm the gates.
Blood on the sword, our eyes blood-red,
  Blind in our puny reign of power,
Do we forget how soon is sped
  Our little hour?

Our little hour,—how soon it dies:
  How short a time to tell our beads,
To chant our feeble Litanies,
  To think sweet thoughts, to do good deeds.
The altar lights grow pale and dim,
  The bells hang silent in the tower—
So passes with the dying hymn
  Our little hour.

From the Somme

IN other days I sang of simple things,
  Of summer dawn, and summer noon and night,
The dewy grass, the dew-wet fairy rings,
    The lark's long golden flight.

Deep in the forest I made melody
  While squirrels cracked their hazel nuts on high,
Or I would cross the wet sand to the sea
    And sing to sea and sky.

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When came the silvered silence of the night
I stole to casements over scented lawns,
And softly sang of love and love's delight
To mute white marble fauns.

Oft in the tavern parlour I would sing
Of morning sun upon the mountain vine,
And, calling for a chorus, sweep the string
In praise of good red wine.

I played with all the toys the gods provide,
I sang my songs and made glad holiday.
Now I have cast my broken toys aside
And flung my lute away.

A singer once, I now am fain to weep.
Within my soul I feel strange music swell,
Vast chants of tragedy too deep—too deep
For my poor lips to tell.

The Secret

WHAT is the secret—the secret
That lies at the heart of it all—
The surge of the stars, the cry of the wind,
And the beat of the sea,
And the surge, and the cry, and the beat of the soul in me?

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S. DONALD COX

PRIVATE, RIFLE BRIGADE, B.E.F., FRANCE

The Wind in the Trees

WIND! Wind! what do you bring
With the whirling flake and the flying cloud?
A victor's bays and a song to sing?
—Nay, but a hero's shroud!

Wild wind! what do you bear—
A song of the men who fought and fell,
A tale of the strong to do and dare?
—Aye, and a tolling bell!

Wind! wind! what do you see—
The flying flags and the soldiers brave,
The marching men, the bold and free?
—Nay, but a new-dug grave!

Wild wind! what do you moan
To the frosty night and the cloud-wracked sky?
—A soldier's cross, a father's groan,
And a mother's hopeless cry!

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On a Girl killed by German Shrapnel

IT is not much: one child the less to sing
Her passage through the hours;
One girl the less to greet the coming spring,
And pluck the summer's flow'rs.

It is not much: one little coffin made
And one more little shroud.
One hush the more within the room's dark shade,
One less word said aloud.

It is not much: one prayer the less to God,
From Whom all prayers have birth,
One scar the more across the fresh green sod,
One shovel more of earth.

It is not much: yet could it have been more?
God thinks the same of such,
As of the proudest hero killed in war:—
Who says it is not much?

FRANCE, *July*, 1917.

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S. Donald Cox

Life

LILT of a child's gay laughter,
Cry of a soul in pain,
Sunshine awhile, and after
Rain.

Day and the zest of living,
Dusk and the dark's release;
After the hour of striving
Peace.

After the conflict's flurry,
Silence serene and deep;
After the stress and hurry
Sleep.

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JOHN EUGENE CROMBIE

CAPTAIN, GORDON HIGHLANDERS

(Killed in Action, St. George's Day, 1917)

The Dream-path

WALKING my dream-paved road on the Hill of Desire
I saw beneath me the City of Quiet Delight;
The warming rays from each home-welcoming fire
Wove a pattern of gold on the velvet curtain of night.

The scent from the hill's rank grass put desire in my soul
To attain to the City below in the Valley of Hope,
But my grey path led beyond the horizon's roll,
Binding my feet in the web of a dream-made rope.

Reluctant, I followed the path, where I knew was Pain,
The distance glared with a furnace glow in the sky,
And the voice of the sea and the splashing of tropic rain
Were the hiss of the steam from untaught Machinery.

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My dream-path led through the Furnace, and Pain, and Fire—
I could not stay nor turn from the road in flight—
But I knew it would lead me back past the Hill of Desire
To the warm hearth-stones in the City of Quiet Delight.

The Pedlar

THERE'S a broken, lame old pedlar a-limping down the street,
Cold sorrow at his heart, a hard road beneath his feet,
Lifeless walls around him and a leaden sky above
As he searches through the city for the face of his lost Love.

Red and blue and golden leaps the flame of his desire;
Red, for glowing embers of a vagabond's night fire,
Blue, to seek the deep unfathomed glory of the sea,
And gold for Northern sunsets, wealth of beggars such as he.

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The fire and sea and sunset are the face of his lost Love,
His heart is plucked by stronger chords than ever cities wove,
But, buried 'twixt the pavement grey, grey walls and smoke-hid skies
In a closely leaded coffin the old pedlar's lost love lies.

The Gate

MUSING alone beside my midnight fire
On some old tale of bygone chivalry,
I heard upon the wind's unending sigh
The muffled feet of many thousand years.
I saw them pass, grey-cloaked and travel-stained,
Toward a crystal gate beyond the stars.
He that is called the Builder came to me
And took me by the hand, and then he spake:
"This is the Gate through which the years must pass
To be absolved from the Eternal Curse
And lay aside their shabby cloak of sin.
Brave men have brought their strength and gentleness,
Children have brought their laughter, women tears
For stones to build the Crystal Gate—and thou?"

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Desolation

OVER the bare, blank line of the ridge,
Over the stump of Sentinel Tree,
The moon slowly crosses the unseen bridge
That is set in the sky from the hills to the sea.

The sun's pale sister, moving yet dead,
The scars show dark on her weary face:
Is it strife of a million years that have bled
Her heart's life, and set Death's frosty sheen in her place?

Is she watching our strife, the tired moon? Can she see
How the earth's face is scarred, her life ebbing fast?
And only the shorn stump of Sentinel Tree
Prays in silence, "How long will her agony last?"

TRENCHES, *December*, 1916.

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The Mist

ALWAYS the rolling mist,
Wrapping the scene in wet and fleecy fold,
Moved as a curtain by the sluggish wind,
Lifting and swaying, falling damp and cold,
It sweeps, yet passes never, soft and blind.
Have sunbeams never kissed
These dreary hills and life-forsaken slopes—
Hidden like women's shoulders in a gown
That mars their beauty? Only shattered hopes
And ghostly fears people the shadowed down.
These sunless wreaths are curling round my heart:
The deadening fingers of the passing years
Are closing, and I cannot thrust apart
Their tightening grip. . . . No ray of sun appears,
Only the rolling mist.

HUTS, FRANCE, *December*, 1916.

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The Shrine

THE first bright spears have pierced the armoured brown,
Broadened and drooped, and snowdrops speck the field :
The lengthening gaze of daylight looking down
Is shocked to see the hedge-row winter sealed
Sleeping in nakedness, and stirs her frame
And with the hawthorn bids her hide her shame.

Returning through the fields at evening hour
I lay before Thy shrine my offering,
My candle-flame a yellow crocus flower,
Its life but newly lit to Thee I bring
In thanks that I can see Thy guiding hand
In every flower that decorates the land.

BILLETS, FRANCE, *March*, 1917.

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Easter Day, 1917—The Eve of the Battle

I ROSE and watched the eternal giant of fire
Renew his struggle with the grey monk Dawn,
Slowly supreme, though broadening streaks of blood
Besmirch the threadbare cloak, and pour his flood
Of life and strength on our yet sleeping choir,
As I went out to church on Easter morn.

Returning with the song of birds and men
Acclaiming victory of throbbing life,
I saw the fairies of the morning shower
Giving to drink each waking blade and flower,
I saw the new world take Communion then—
And now 'tis night and we return to strife.

HUTS, FRANCE, *April*, 1917.

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GEOFFREY H. CRUMP

MAJOR, ESSEX REGIMENT

God

I WENT alone into the fields to-night,
And stood upon the hillside, where the oaks
Have stood and talked of God in the twilight
For centuries, and cracked their ancient jokes
Over our heads; those veterans know more
Of God than we have learned with all our lore.

I pressed my cheek against an oak's rough bark,
And watched the sun drop down behind the hill;
Silence fell on the valley; the last lark
Was hushed; and suddenly the wind was still . . .
A breath of air went rustling through the trees,
And God passed by me in the sunset breeze.

A clock chimed in the valley down below;
Some children shouted; and the blue smoke curled
Out of the cottage chimneys—'twas as though
There could be nothing ugly in the world;
The lights gleamed from the houses in the wood;
And God smiled, for He saw that it was good.

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Then, as I laid my head upon the ground,
And waited there for dark night's close embrace,
I heard, far off, a murmuring, rumbling sound,
As if the earth groaned at her own disgrace;
It trembled on the breeze, swelled, and then died;
Again the branches rustled, and God sighed.

Sunset

LIKE a vast forest on some distant plain,
Out in the west, dark, rounded clouds lay low
Upon the sea: o'er them, the sun's broad train—
The glories of the golden afterglow.

Gold, and then crimson: changing, through degrees
Of red and green, to fields of turquoise blue:
Then darker blue, that challenges the seas
To deeper darkness, as the storm-clouds do.

Then, when the stars gleamed faintly, blushing red
At their own eagerness: and as this feast
Of beauty seemed complete, and day was dead,
I turned my face, and looked toward the east.

There I saw that which made me hold my breath;
I'd thought the sunset fair: now met my sight,

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In perfect contrast—like the peace of death
After life's glare—the grandeur of the night.

In empty sky, still tinged with wondrous blue,
The full moon hung, displaying royally
Her cold and naked beauty, as she threw
Her path of silver moonbeams on the sea.

God showed me then, that, if we learn to love
The beauties that He sends us in our day,
More lovely yet will night celestial prove—
The perfect calm of passions passed away.

INDIAN OCEAN, *November*, 1916.

Off St. Helena

WHEN I sit silent on the swaying deck,
And drink in the soft splendour of the night,
The pale, proud moon; the sky, all cloud a-fleck;
The silver balls of phosphorescent light
In the white foam; the davits curving black
Against the sky; the tall and stately mast,
Swinging from star to star—though these all lack
Nothing of beauty, perfect, pure, and vast,
'Tis naught to me: save that I may devise
That I do look again into your eyes.

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Plymouth Mists

TEAR-DIMMED eyes my loved one lifted,
When she said good-bye to me;
Sweet, grey eyes, where colours shifted
Like the shadows on the sea:
O'er the cliffs of Devon, keeping
Guard, like eyes, o'er Devon's mouth,
Sad, grey mists came stilly creeping,
Sorrow-laden, from the South.

Through the weary weight of sadness,
And the numbness of despair,
Came a thought that turned to gladness
Even the pain I could not bear:
Those proud cliffs were calling clearly,
As Drake heard them in his day:—
"England knows you love her dearly,
Weeps to send you far away."

'Neath this brazen, blazing heaven,
In a wilderness of sand,
Daily England's lives are given
For her newest, oldest land;

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Does there come a dream, consoling
  Those who die on foreign ground,
Of the sea-mists, slowly rolling
  Homewards over Plymouth Sound?

Should I die, I'll see them drifting
  Through the mirage, ere I go;
Maybe, if the mists are lifting,
  I'll see sunshine on the Hoe!
Should I live, when this is over,
  And we've done what is to do,
England, smile to greet your lover,
  When he hurries home to you!

Basra, *December*, 1916.

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R. C. G. DARTFORD

CAPTAIN, ATTACHED TO PORTUGUESE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, FRANCE

A Soldier's Question: Spring, 1917

CURSE I the Spring that God has sent
Raising such discord in my soul? . . .
'Twas fitter when the winter's blast
Could lash my spirit to the mast
And send me drugged by brute control
To battle with a grim content!

Then Death took hold on the neck of Life
And Earth's rough scalp lay touzled and scarred,
And the winter-scream swept round me fierce—
The softer visions to disperse—
While stripped by storms I stood on guard
Cleaving the wind with keener knife.

But now with Spring to dream or grieve
I am tempted, and the blushful day
Reveals her old-time beauty, far
From mating with the ghost of War.
Am I then laggard if I pray
From this soul's scaffold quick reprieve?

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War-time Consolation

BUT for the watches dark
Would you welcome the morrow?
Can any joy reach your heart
But mounts upon sorrow?
Surely pains in which you take part
Pleasures will borrow?

Welcome Death

WHEN you've been dead beat, and had to go on
While others died; when your turn to be gone
Is overdue; when you're pushed ahead
("Go on till you die" is all they said),
Then die—and you're glad to be dead!

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CLIFFORD J. DRUCE

2ND LIEUT., GLOUCESTER REGIMENT

Forecast

IF I should chance to fall, and find
A last couch on this soil of France,
Do not seek out with yearning mind
The place, nor give my grave one glance.

The cross would mark a cenotaph;
And careless of the flesh thus laid
In unfamiliar earth, I'd laugh
To know how quickly it decayed.

My spirit, freed, impatient still
At the irrelevant, blind stroke
That stole the servant of its will
With all half-done, with thews unbroke,

Would swiftly reach the land which knew
The love that time had not yet staled,
And haunt the country whence it drew
The life that has not sped nor failed.

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Perhaps beside some lonely copse
A brook would flow with less of ease,
The brooding wind that sways the tops
Murmur more plaintive in the trees.

And should you, lingering there alone,
Feel on your face, some evening
Its touch, that stranger, rarer grown,
Clothes some sweet, straining, half-spoke thing;

Know that the fate self-fixed must yet
Endure, whether I die or live;
And I still strive to ease the debt
Of kisses I was born to give.

FRANCE, *May*, 1917.

To a Grave of the Glosters

A WOODEN cross above your head,
You lie, your course already sped;
And in this alien plain must rest
The bones and body Cotswold bred.

Not long since, insolent with life
You made the beech-topped barrow rife
With your tumultuous vivid youth,
With other lads, in sport and strife.

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And though you shook the earth o'er those
Old warriors, close couched there in rows,
  Your careless clamour had no power
To trouble their sublime repose:

Who, if they felt at all the tread
Of such as you pass overhead,
  Wise with the wisdom of long years
Were patient, knowing that their bed

Was spacious, patient too, withal;
That centuries after you were thrall
  To undistinguished dust, they still
Would hold their place, each in his stall.

But now, ere many months are told
Over *your* head, encased in mould,
  Children may play, with little care
Of one beneath them, silent, cold.

Take my salute: ere twenty years
You knew, you reckon as your peers
  The men of axe and spear of stone,
As far removed as they from fears

And doubts that vex men such as me.
From all demands from henceforth free
  On weary limbs and spirit tired,
You hold eternity in fee.

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Spring in Picardy

WHEN earth was bare, and sky a murky pall,
And snow and sleet filled all the miles and days
That held us two asunder, all my gaze
Was bounded by an impenetrable wall
Of chill, numbed, burdened hours, that rose so tall
I only dimly knew that your fair ways
Lay far beyond it, where desire could raise
To bring you nearer, no sufficient call.

Ah God! that blank was better borne than this
Flushed wantonness of May, these maiden leaves
That bare themselves to bathe in the ardent moon.
There is a false note in the wood-dove's croon;
And all is meaningless, show that deceives,
Hollow, lacking its core and clue—your kiss.

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H. S. GRAHAM

CAPT., R.E.T.

The Seers

THE Poets who have sung have not revealed
The great abiding purpose for which God
Has led again the Nations to the Field
Of Blood, through which our fathers ofttimes trod.

And we must wait; for unto them alone
The Truth is naked who themselves, ahead
Of all their fellow-men, away have thrown
Their Life, and on the battlefield lie dead.

To them who thus to God have bared the Soul
Is shown the Truth, the Victory of Loss,
Of Sacrifice of all for God, the bowl
Which Jesus drained for man upon the Cross!

To them we turn, our lost, our best, our brave!
Yet should we hear though one rose from the grave?

FRANCE, 1916.

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The Field of Blood

STRANGER, this foreign field wherein you lie
Has many human vessels fashioned true
Under the Potter's Thumb. The Priests did buy
It with the silver Traitor Judas threw
Into the Treasury, as he confessed
He had betrayed the Blood of Innocence.
They bought the field for weary Strangers' rest;
And you are Stranger thrice,—to War's offence,
To death and to this land. The World allied
To other Traitors long have seized Our Lord
And by this War have Him re-crucified;
And soldiers guard His Tomb with naked swords.
But for all this the stone shall roll away,
And you shall rise with Him on Easter Day!

6th December, 1916.

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WILFRID J. HALLIDAY

2ND LIEUT., WEST YORKS

"An Unknown British Soldier"

'TIS just a little wooden cross
In lonely grandeur there
That smiles upon a rugged mound
Of weedy, unattended ground,
For he was no man's care.

A broken bayonet marked the spot
And troops would turn aside,
Till loving hands rough cast the wood
And shaped a cross, emblem of blood,
To tell where he had died.

He died unowned, for none could tell
The silent hero's name:
They saw the bloody wounds he bore,
The shattered limbs, but nothing more,
And knew not whence he came.

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" An unknown British soldier "—that
  Was all that they could say.
'Twas not for them to wet the eye,
Why lives a soldier but to die?
  And so they went their way.

But I may pause and probe his heart
  Before the shadow fell,
And think that he had still a prayer
For those frail souls who soon would share
  The moment black as Hell.

. . . . . .

The flowers had bloomed when last I looked,
  The grass was freshly mown:
A shapely cross so chastely white
Shone in the dazzling noonday light,
  Yet still the same " Unknown."

Unknown! Ah, no! thy name still lives,
  For One had seen thee fall
And marked the sacrifice thus made,
The debt of love so nobly paid,
  Faithful to Freedom's call.

FRANCE, *August*, 1917.

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MALCOLM HEMPHREY

CORPORAL, ARMY ORDNANCE CORPS

The New Year*

THE white moon like a queenly ship
  Sails down the blue and tropic night,
And all the clouds in homage slip
  Into her light.

A quiet veil lies on the earth,
  Whose silver glory makes me sad—
Beyond, ah me! War's crashing mirth
  Rings wild and mad.

Begone, old year, pass from thy own,
  And make thou way for newer life;
Nor grace nor pity will atone
  For all thy strife.

I watch thy last few embers die,
  And thy bleak ashes—blown around
By strong winds that go whirling by—
  Sink to the ground.

* The idea of this poem came to me on the last night of the old year as, lying awake long after "lights out," I gazed out at the sky through my tent lattice-window.

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But rise to sink, and each black flake
Clings as a lambent stain upon
The young year's blossoms as they wake
And then is gone.

Yet wait! some day a greater gale
Of Hope and Faith shall drive all doubt
And sharp despair beyond the pale—
Shall drive without

The soul's infinite sorrow and
Vast shadows of a red, red year,
And undefiled, superbly grand,
Holy and dear

Again the asphodel shall grace
The world's lone, ravaged wilderness;
And Youth, in roaming through that place
Of quietness,

Shall rest beside the peaceful graves
Where wild bees hover in the grass,
Which every warm and soft breeze waves;
And ere he pass

Shall kneel and lift a hymn of praise
For those who fought, without a fear
Or doubting heart to tear, to raise
God's good New Year!

East Africa, *January*, 1917.

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BRIAN HILL

2ND LIEUT., DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY

Salonika in November

UP above the grey hills the wheeling birds are calling,
Round about the cold grey hills in never-resting flight;
Far along the marshes a drifting mist is falling,
Scattered tents and sandy plain melt into the night.

Round about the grey hills rumbles distant thunder,
Echoes of the mighty guns firing night and day,—
Grey guns, long guns, that smite the hills asunder,
Grumbling and rumbling, and telling of the fray.

Out among the islands twinkling lights are glowing,
Distant little fairy lights, that gleam upon the bay;
All along the broken road grey transport waggons going
Up to where the long grey guns roar and crash alway.

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Up above the cold grey hills the wheeling birds are crying,
Brother calls to brother, as they pass in restless flight.
Lost souls, dead souls, voices of the dying,
Circle o'er the hills of Greece and wail into the night.

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MARTIN HILL

CORPORAL, R.A.M.C.

On Seeing the Coast of England from Boulogne

A LONG low line of polished white
Faintly the cliffs of England gleam,
Now slowly fading out of sight,
Now swiftly leaping back, they seem
Strange joys, strange sorrows to impart,
And voices whisper at my heart.

A quiet wood, a quiet lane,
The song of birds amid the trees,
The splash of sun, the sting of rain,
The warm sweet air, the sighing breeze,
And you beside our cottage door
At eventide. Dear heart, once more

I see the first faint sunbeam tip
The East with gold, the hills light up,
Or stealing lower softly sip
The dewdrop from the rose's cup;
The glint of gorse upon the down,
The long ploughed meadow strong and brown.

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We wander 'mid the grassfield where
The busy reaper wends his way,
The sharp scythe flashes on the air,
Heavy the scent of new-mown hay
Floats down the breeze, and all around
The stricken poppies strew the ground.

Slowly my half-felt sorrows go
And hope comes, gazing seaward where
The dim cliffs glitter, for I know
That these and you await me there,
And I shall find them dearer far
Enriched by all the pangs of war.

Requiescat

HOW young and bright he was, and when he laughed
The air around seemed sharing in his joy;
Fair was the world to him, nor spot nor stain
Of all its hidden ugliness had laid
A mark upon his face (that mark that sears
And brands the souls that know it but too well);
But all that's lovely in it lay beneath
The wonder that shone shyly in his eyes.
A child of Nature he, of woods and sunlit ways,
Of rolling meadows where the air was sweet

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With new-born blossoms and the scent of hay;
Of hills and valleys, laughing streams and lakes
Where rustling reeds their whispered secrets told.
All these he knew and loved, they were his friends,
His sole companions, and through them he learnt
To know his mother Nature; all her moods
Diverse and strange he learnt them one by one;
Her summer laughter and her autumn tears,
Her seeming winter harshness and the sweet
Serene repentance of her early spring.
Life was his love, and in her warm soft arms
He freedom found from care, repose and peace,
And finding knew that it sufficed.

. . . . . .

And then came War to claim him, dragged him forth,
Forth from his quiet world, and flung him down
Bewildered and amazed, yet unafraid,
The merest cypher in that crowded train.
So hour by hour the meanness of War,
And all its horrors, petty hates and sins
Raged round his struggling head, until the day
A wandering bullet found him, and Death took
Unto himself what Life once held so dear.

. . . . . .

His face was smiling when they picked him up
As though he'd learnt his Mother's last great secret
And in learning found all well.

No. 7 Stationary Hospital, B.E.F., France.

Digitized by Google

HAROLD JOHN JARVIS

CORPORAL, THE DUKE OF CORNWALL'S LIGHT INFANTRY

Dulce et Decorum est Pro Patri Mori

IF England calls to-day—
The last long call of all,
Valhalla's Trumpet-call:
Then may I live until
The Goal shines past the Hill
And in the last grand rally
Hear echoed God's Reveille
In the Home Camp.

If England calls this day—
If in the great, grim fight
I fall—with eyes all bright
With sacrificial flame
Whispering Her great name:
Let these weak verses show
To all the friends I know—
I gladly died.

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If England calls this day—
Remembered not hardship
Glad-borne in War's dread grip—
Not the strain of training,
Or a year's campaigning,
But the joy of greeting
Pleasures, tho' but fleeting,
Entwined therewith.

If England calls this day—
May those who gave their love,
Who lifted me above
The petty things of Earth,
And taught me all the worth
Of splendid aim in Life,
Know I, 'mid all this strife,
Remember them.

If England calls this day—
The last sweet Twilight calm,
When guns withheld their harm
Awhile, and let me dream
Of Things That might Have Been—
Leaf-music in the trees,
And treasured reveries,
Shall die with me.

Digitized by Google

If England calls this day—
No craven heart would go
From out a world loved so,
As I love this. Each day
More loved is Nature's sway
Of Earth, its every joy
Of Pain or Joy—yet I,
So gladly die.

If England calls this day—
With yet one aim unwon,
Of all aims just the one
Far dearer than the rest—
To woo and win the best
Thing that the World can give—
The Gift of Love—To Live
I would not wish.

If England calls this day—
Then shall I die that She
May live in Liberty—
That She may still be great
To rise above blind Hate
Of Foes—Her Flag unfurled,
God's England to the world,
For aye to be.

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If England calls this day—
The rose-clad days of June,
That fled by all too soon,
Shall be with me again
In Memory—and when
The daylight sudden closes,
The perfume of June Roses
Shall waft me hence.

If England calls this day—
From those far Hills of Home,
Beyond the sky's dim dome—
Shall merge Valkyries fair,
Swift riding thro' the air—
Who know I shall be there,
Treading the rose-strewn stair
To that New Land.

If England calls this day—
In the Valkyrie's touch
Shall be forgotten much:
Her flying, perfumed hair
Shall speak of Roses rare—
And climbing thro' the breeze,
Remembered melodies
Shall call me Home.

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At a Wayside Shrine

THE column halts before a wayside shrine
To change formation into battle line
From double file. 'Tis even, and the sun
Its daily circling race has wellnigh done.
Behind me in the West, a dying glow
Of gold still gleams, to cast a pale halo
Upon the shrine.

How many men before
To-night have halted at this spot, and wore
The same grim, ready look that I see now
Painted on every face from chin to brow,
And in each eye? One and all are ready
For come what may; each man now stands steady
Waiting command.

And now the line will pass
The shrine—itself as steady as the mass
Of England's sons slow moving to the fray,
Their Destiny now in the hands of—say,
The dim Divinity within that shrine—
A loving God (the stricken Christ His sign
Of Love)—or what?

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The shrine is rent and drilled
With bullets—aye, and some of them have killed,
Passing right thro' the thin mud walls, and past
The Hanging Figure in the plaster cast,
On to some human target, trudging by,
(Dropping it low with sharp surpriséd cry)
Even as I trudge by.

So have some died
For Right—bravely as Christ the Crucified
Died on Calvary's Cross; just as brave
And just as sacrificially. To save
The world He died, or so the worn-out creeds
Of Church would teach—but they, but men, dared deeds
And died as men. . . .

Because of Greater Love—
That Love of Loves, all other loves above—
The love of Home and Friends and Native Soil.
That these might never be the Foeman's spoil,
They gave their lives, their youth, their golden dreams
And airy castles, built where Sunlight gleams,
And Roses bloom . . .

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And gave them willingly
As Christ gave His, that day on Calvary.
A stricken Christ . . . a broken shrine . . . and men
In khaki marching by. . . . How little less
Divine these khaki-clads in their worn dress
Than He, the Christ of God? For in each man
The same soul burns.

And ere I leave the shrine,
I look upon the Christ—then at the line
Of men . . . back to His face and those closed eyes
So open when one lingeringly looks
As if into their depths. These men . . . those eyes . . .
Loving, pain-haunted eyes, hard gazing down
They seem,
On these—these other Christs in thin disguise
Of khaki-brown.

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D. T. JONES

2ND LIEUT., M.G.C., FRANCE

Flint

STAND in a hall, where carvèd men
Make love to thee and win thy heart.
And when thou kissest, cling for aye:
For of their band, thou art.

To a Warship

PROUD monster, swung in the bosom of the prouder deep,
I hear thy song, that hustles down the corridors of Time;
Is doom exultant in its strains—or is it peace?

. . . . . .

Cast forth thy iron soul upon the seas—and break
This cruel Inquisition of To-day.

. . . . . .

What wilt thou sing? What story wilt thou tell?
Where dwells thy fate—in Heaven or in Hell?

B.E.F., FRANCE, *August* 16, 1917.

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R. WATSON KERR

2ND LIEUT., TANK CORPS

Sounds by Night

I HEAR the dull low thunder of the guns
Beyond the hills that doze uneasily,
A sullen doomful growl that ever runs
From end to end of the heavy freighted sky:
A friend of mine writes, squatted on the floor,
And scrapes by yellow spluttering candle light.
"Ah, hush!" he breathes, and gazes at the door,
That creaks on rusty hinge, in pale affright!
(No words spoke he, nor I, for well we knew
What rueful things these sounds did tell.)
A pause—I hear the trees sway sighing thro'
The gloom, like dismal moan of hollow knell,
Then out across the dark, and startling me
Bursts forth a laugh, a shout of drunken glee!

FRANCE, 1917.

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Rain

AH! when it rains all day
And the sky is a mist
That creeps by chillily
Where sun once kissed,
Like death pale shroud,
My soul cries out aloud
In hopeless misery.

I cannot read nor write
A line for gloom,
My life lags, drenched of light
To cheer its tomb;
Chill and wet,
Comfortless I fret
In hopeless night!

And naught to hear but rain
Battering the ground!
O numbing pain!
O maddening sound!
Drowned in sky
Trees drip, drip, and sigh
And drip, drip, again!

FRANCE, 1917.

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The Ancient Thought

THE round moon hangs like a yellow lantern in
the trees
That lie like lace against the silk blue sky ;
O still the night ! O hushed the breeze—
Surely God is very nigh.

At the Base

THINK not of me as facing Death,
Tattered, labouring for breath ;
Rather think of one who strays
Dreaming dreams by perfumed ways.

Soon I may die, ah, true, 'tis true,
But look ! the night is rich with blue
Of peaceful skies, and soft the breeze
Sings in the trembling poplar trees !

And slowly thro' the rustling grass
O'er woodland glade, I, dreaming, pass ;
To-morrow ? Death ? Ah, what are these
But passing childish phantasies !

FRANCE, *July*, 1917.

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In Bitterness

TAKE Thou this box,
O Heart's Desire,
In it lies Thy ring
And more, my heart, bleeding;
Take out Thy ring,
O Heart's Desire,
And, laughing, toss the box
Into the fire!

FRANCE, *July*, 1917.

DUDLEY H. HARRIS

CADET, TANK CORPS

Left Alone

LEFT alone among the dying!
All around are moaning, sighing,
Or are cursing, sobbing, crying
In Death's crushing, hushing hand.
We are torn upon the wire,
We are scorched and burnt with fire,
Or lie choking in the mire
Of the star-lit "No Man's Land."

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Hear our prayers, O! gentle Jesus,
Send Thine angels down to ease us
From the pains of Hell that seize us,
    From our burning, yearning thirst.
We are broken, we are battered,
Bodies twisted, crushed and shattered
By the shells and bullets scattered
    On this strip of land accurst.

Round about are shadows creeping,
Formless Things which wake the sleeping,
Glaring eyes from shell-holes peeping,
    Mocking always at our pain.
Cold and wet our limbs are numbing,
Fevered brows are drumming, drumming—
Are the stretchers *never* coming?
    Are we numbered with the slain?

God in Heaven, canst Thou hear us?
Mary Mother! Dost Thou fear us?
Stretcher-bearers, are you near us?
    Give us water or we die!
But a grisly shadow's creeping
With his cruel scythe a-reaping
Weary souls which fall to sleeping
    In a choking, croaking sigh.

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FRANK C. LEWIS

FLIGHT SUB-LIEUT., R.N.A.S.

Belgium, 1914

I

THE lithe flames flicker through the veil of night,
Licking with bitter tongue; and soon the dawn
Will come, and gaunt and black against the white
Cool sky will loom a smoking home, forlorn
Of all the joy and peace that once was there.
The pleading, pitiful dead lie mute and cold
And all untended still. The fields are bare
Of the young green, the parent of the gold.

O little land, great-hearted, who didst give
Thine all for sake of others' liberty,

Flight Sub-Lieut. Frank C. Lewis, R.N.A.S., was killed in aerial combat in France on August 21st, 1917, aged 19 years. He had only been twelve days in France, being selected for a fighting squadron three days after he landed. His squadron commander described him as having already proved "a brilliant pilot," and of his last air fight that "he fought bravely to a noble end." He fell in our lines and is buried at Bailleul. The Belgium sonnets were written in 1915 while he was a boy at Marlborough.

Digitized by Google

Knowing the cost, nor shrinking at the thought,
Be sure that thy immortal name shall live
Writ large in thine own ashes. Men shall cry,
"This was a nation marvellously wrought!"

II

There came a voice from out the darkness crying—
A pleading voice, the voice of one in thrall—
"Come, ye who pass—oh, heed ye not my sighing?
Come and deliver! Hear, oh hear my call!
For when the invader stood before my gate
Demanding passage through with haughty tone,
A voice cried loud, 'Wilt thou endure this fate?
Better have death than live when honour's flown!'
And so my children now lie slain by him
I had not wronged; with strife my land is riven;
Dishonoured here I lie with fettered limb.
To desecration all my shrines are given,
And nought remains but bondage drear and grim....
God! Is there any justice under heaven?"

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Ad Profunda

WE have built high walls of pomp and pride
And wealth, around our inmost Being,
And deep, unseen, within there hide
Visions too bright for our dull seeing.

We yearning stand, and cannot pass
To where the Soul with these is One;
Our utterance is as the grass
Withering beneath the noonday sun.

The Waters of Infinity
Break on the spirit's lonely shore:
Lo! the wall crumbles, and we see
All we have hoped and striven for.

O, then all time is lost in Time,
The Soul has burst its prison-bars:
We walk with feet still deep in slime,
But with our heads above the stars.

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The Downs, looking from Savernake Forest

WITH eager steps I climbed the hill
Ploughed with deep, age-old furrows, till
I reached the forest's edge and gazed
Across the low red town smoke-hazed,
Upon the downs, windy and bare,
Ridge upon ridge unending. There
No sound is heard save only these,
The wind's wild song 'mid lonely trees,
The echo of sheep-bells, and the cry
Of peewits circling in the sky.
Back in the dawn of time on earth,
Before she brought her sons to birth,
You stood the same as now you stand—
Untroubled, vast, majestic, grand:
Only you had not heard the tramp,
Old Hackpen Hill and Barbury Camp,
Of many an army passing by
Under a blue and cloud-flecked sky.
And happy they who fell in fight
Upon your clear and wind-swept height:
With thunder for their requiem
And the dark clouds to weep for them,

Digitized by Google

They dream the centuries away
Through changeless night and changeless day.

O Downs, I think it good that you
Have given your secret to the few
Who love you and can understand.
You are not as this other land
Trodden by all who chance to pass:
Only we tread your close-cropped grass
Who love to feel the beat of rain
Washing away all town-born pain:
Wind: and the heights whence one may see
The littleness of man: and we
There feel at last that we are free.

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P. H. B. LYON

LIEUT., DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY

Requiem

LET others comfort your distress
With soldier tales of simple art,
Telling his strength, his manliness,
The noble way he played his part.
You should be proud;—ah, gallant heart,
Say not that pride is comfortless.

But I have rarer words than praise,
For more than common love was mine,
And now his dear remembered ways
Are treasured in the sacred shrine
Where human mingles with divine,
A solace for the lonely days.

He battled for no worldly hire,
No stern ambition to appease,
From fight to fight his heart's desire
Was set on higher things than these—
His home beside the English seas,
And children's faces round the fire,

Digitized by Google

Red clouds, and the low sun agleam
In cottage windows dim with age,
The summer sounds of wood and stream,
These were his faith, his heritage;
His life—a happy pilgrimage,
And death the dawning of a dream.

And on that day he went to die
His spirit soared on rainbow wings,
Gladly he went, with head held high,
And singing as a lover sings
To greet the dusky night, that brings
His hour of happiness more nigh.

Ah, surely when his life was sped
That spirit hastened to your side.
Would you but raise your weeping head
You'd hear him whisper in the tide,
Or on the winds of heaven ride
For ever with the mighty dead.

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P. H. B. Lyon

The Lay of the Bombardier
(Old style)

MY ways are lonely and apart,
My very name a thing of fear;
I am the man without a heart,
I am the Lord High Bombardier.

My mattins is the shrapnel's scream,
My evensong the bullet's crack;
The happy state of which I dream
To strafe and never be strafed back.

Oft-times with Red Hats hovering near
I hold a mystic high debate
On how to fill the Boche with fear,
On Frightfulness, or "What is Hate?"

How some bombs burst long ere they land,
Others, the choicest, as they fall;
How some dissect the thrower's hand,
While most will never burst at all.

With that spring-throated Juggernaut
That spits explosive at the sky.
No dark-browed scholar devil-taught
Could be more intimate than I.

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For me no more the secret cult
  Of "Jampot," "Hairbrush," "Pitcher," "Ball,"
Holds fear; the erratic catapult
  Has lost all power to appal.

With many a brother anarchist
  By night I prowl from ten till one,
Thirsting to keep a bloody tryst
  With some rotund unready Hun.

So runs my life, but when the end
  Comes on the wings of shot or shell,
No tears will save, nor loving friend,
  For me there waits the bomber's Hell,

Where with the unsubstantial shades
  In groves where shells eternal fall
I'll fill Satanic hand-grenades
  With fourth-dimension ammonal.

FLANDERS, 1915.

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IAN H. T. MACKENZIE

2ND LIEUT., HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY

Desire

THIS is my desire
Which burns the fuel of my soul.
O terrible white fire!
Leaping to blister the sky.
Beyond my sight;
Ever reaching higher;
My strength and my delight;
Oh out of my control!
This is my desire:—

To hear the song that beauty sings,
To refashion the earth with the joy of things,
To grasp in a corner of my mind
The sunlit clouds, the driving wind.
To let imagination fly
Up the beauty of the sky.
To hold it with me when I go
To sing my song on earth below.

Digitized by Google

This is the desire
Which burns the fuel of my soul.
O terrible white fire!
Leaping to blister the sky.
Beyond my sight;
Ever reaching higher;
My strength and my delight;
Oh out of my control!
This is my desire.

And So Man Lives

AND so man lives
Between those shadowy gates
Where darkness covers up his memory,
And thought with thought forever separates
The disconnected things that he can see.
Those two strange steeps:
One whence he wakes,
And how he cannot tell;
One in which he falls
And knows not how he fell,
Where life with memory breaks.

. . . . . .

Digitized by Google

Memory like water
Surging round our ears
Brings its echoes, softer
Than the sound of laughter—
Laughter of some strange forgotten years.

. . . . . .

Someone gazing in a stream sees reflections hurry by;

Someone underneath a tree searching all its greenery;

Someone looking at a face holds a flying memory.

. . . . . .

Broken images that pass
Through a twisted looking-glass;
Things we do and things we say
Ever fluttering away.

. . . . . .

Disconnected things we see
In the brightness of the day

Just a flower growing there
In the happiness of air.

Digitized by Google

Tiny little birds that sing
In the melody of spring.

. . . . .

What we are and what we see
Are only shreds of memory.
Broken shreds and fragments pass
Through a twisted looking-glass.

Digitized by Google

CHARLES JOHN BEECH MASEFIELD

M.C., Acting Capt., 5th North Staffs Regt.

(Killed in Action, July, 1917)

Enlisted, or The Recruits

HUMBLY, O England, we offer what is of little worth,
Just our bodies and souls and everything else we have;
But thou with thy holy cause wilt hallow our common earth,
Giving us strength in the battle—and peace, if need, in the grave.

Humble, O England, we are, for of hero-fathers we come,
Men that contested with tyrants the mightier destinies;
Philip of Spain we remember, and the ships that never went home,
And him that was caught at last, and isled in the warder seas.

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Humbly, O England, we bring thee life in its folly-stained youth,
That which, it may be, has striven, but ever has slackened and tired;
The faltering, often deceived, to combat now for the Truth,
Dim-visioned, to smite for the morrow unknown but desired.

September, 1914.

Sailing for Flanders

TO need any more the skies or man to importune
For us departing to-day with spirits at peace,
Now that the inner warfares, that tire men, cease—
For us the chosen of God's lot, the spoilt darlings of Fortune.

Against the beasts in men let loose from their cages
We go forth with a lightened and proud heart,
We who are the men summoned to a high part,
To be known of the envious youth of unborn ages.

Digitized by Google

We have feared old Death, but now have we learned
our error,
Seeing him there in the mire us so kindly await—
A comrade befitting the hour of a world's fate,
And we look him full in the eyes; we are rid of our
last terror.

True that Death is an ill, but the worse ills are many;
Shame and slow rotting, cold and greasy years,
Pride in dishonour—these things hold our fears;
We can play pitch and toss with our lives as a boy
with a penny.

We have spent ourselves to win us a lady's favour,
But now the spending is grown to a leaping fire,
And winning for ourselves seems but a strange
desire;
Her eyes are remote as stars; her kisses have lost
their savour.

We have put life away and spurn the ways of the
living;
We have broken with the old selves who gathered
and got,
And are free with the freedom of men who have
not;
We partake the heroic fervours of giving and again
giving.

Digitized by Google

Was it only for Death we were borne of our Mothers?
Only for Death created the dear love of our wives?
Only for Death and in vain we endeavoured our lives?
Yea, life was given to be given; March onward, my brothers!

January, 1915.

Two Julys

I WAS so vague in 1914; tossed
Upon too many purposes, and worthless;
Moody; to this world or the other lost,
Essential nowhere; without calm and mirthless:
And now I have gained one for many ends,
See my straight road stretch out so white, so slender,
That happy road, the road of all my friends,
Made glad with peace, and holy with surrender.

Proud, proud we fling to the winds of Time our token,
And in our need there wells in us the power,

Digitized by Google

Given England's swords to keep her honour clean.
Which they shall be which pierce, and which be
broken,
We know not, but we know that every hour
We must shine brighter, take an edge more keen.

July, 1915.

In Honorem Fortium

I SOMETIMES think that I have lived too long,
Who have heard so many a gay brave singer's
song
Fail him for ever—seen so many sails
Lean out resplendent to the evil gales,
Then Death, the wrecker, get his harvest in.
Oh, ill it is, when men lose all, to win ;
Grief though it be to die, 'tis grief yet more
To live and count the dear dead comrades o'er.

. . . . . .

Peace. After all you died not. We've no fear
But that, long ages hence, you will be near—
A thought by night—on the warm wind a breath,
Making for courage, putting old Death,

Digitized by Google

Living wherever men are not afraid
Of aught but making bravery a parade.
Yes, parleying with fear, they'll pause and say,
"At Gommecourt boys suffered worse that day";
Or, hesitating on some anxious brink,
They will become heroic when they think,
"Did they not rise mortality above
Who staked a lifetime all made sweet with love?"

May, 1917.

Digitized by Google

JOHN MASON

CAPTAIN, ROYAL SCOTS

My Country

THERE is no dearer land in all the world
Than thee, my country, girded by the sea,
Where rocks re-echo to the bounding waters hurl'd,
And all is endless sight and mystery to me.
The silent distances of hills, replete
With tideless joy, eternal hope
Upspringing with the eagle's pennon-beat,
Free to the airs, with ne'er a tether-rope
To check its flight.

The sky above may weep, and seldom smile,
And mirky be the frown upon thy brow.
Yet O! thy mountain woods and endless mile
Of sea, sing joy unbound, and life, that now
Expansive breathes the freshness of the free.
Thy piney airs and salt-sea breezes blown,
With peaty scent and loamy breath of lea
Seek out the soul that nowhere else hath known
The like to thee.

Digitized by Google

There is no dearer land in all the world
Than thee, my country, girded by the sea.
'Twere joy to those who bear the flag unfurl'd
In ruthless strife to keep thine acres free,
To dip the hand in blood, the face to scar
With sword of death, that thou unconquered may
For Freedom stand, the vanquisher of war,
Chaste guardian of the unprotected way
To peace and right.

Digitized by Google

HARLEY MATTHEWS

PRIVATE, A.I.F.

Homeward

TO the old friends and faces,
To the old life again,
To often dreamed-of places,
Pleasant in sun or rain:
For home my face is set;
Home! Madly goes my heart
With calling up each minute
Those visions none forget,
All that the word has in it—
For each man things apart.

We watched our land go from us,
The sea stretched far, unknown;
To all it glowed with promise. . . .
I watch the sea alone.
Some lie within its sound,
Scarce past its edge of foam,
Yet hear it surging never.
And some their grave have found
Far from the sea for ever,
The sea that takes us home.

Digitized by Google

I hear you, waves that glisten,
I see your path for me.
Maybe the dead can listen,
See more than I can see :
Not for the guns, their sound
Heard muffled through the loam,
Nor noise of sea or heavens.
Not see the trees around,
No ! not the grass-roots even,
But sounds and sights of home.

Digitized by Google

MURRAY McCLYMONT

2ND LIEUT., 2/10TH (SCOTTISH) K.L.R.

God's Acre

Dedicated to my "skipper," Captain Alan Cookson (killed in action 27th June, 1917), who now sleeps eternally in the shadow of the little grey church at . . .

WHEN sands of Time have run their course
And mortal heart is stilled,
We render back unto its Source
The dust that He fulfilled;

And in some still, subdued spot
Where all is peace, and they
Who walk the silent paths are taught
To meditate and pray,

We to that dust its rest afford
And dry our idle tears:
For Death is peace, and Peace adored
Reigns here throughout the years.

B.E.F., FRANCE, *Sept.*, 1917.

Digitized by Google

Hills of Home

TO gloam-blue hills that shadow moorland spaces,
To legend-haunted vales where all is still,
To that grey land where slumber martyred races,
My spirit flees at will.

I hear from far away the whaup's wild crying
Low o'er the moor and wind-swept fringe of sea,
And longing fills my breast and I am sighing—
Sighing for love of thee.

I see, as in a spell, the bracken flowing
Like silver streams beneath a battered moon;
I see the heather darker, redder blowing—
Flushing to crimson soon!

In dreams I roam the long-forsaken places,
In scented wood, by rill and grassy howe;
And, smiling, greet the old familiar faces—
And I am happy now!

Dear Hills of Home, I ask but this of Heaven
(If thou my captive spirit wilt not free!)
That in my dying moments I be given
One last, fond kiss from thee.

1916.

Digitized by Google

To a Fallen Comrade

I HEARD the voice of Spring come softly pleading
Across the fresh and breathing wold to-day :
The sun, set free from cloudy bonds, was speeding
To greet the earth with each impassioned ray.

Wide-flung my casement in the cool I listened !
The birds were busy toying with a song,
And far afield where dappled grasses glistened
The meadow brook was murmuring along.

And then there came a bee with yet the numbing
Languors of the winter on its wings :
It turned to gold the quiet with its humming—
And then resumed its drowsy wanderings.

I looked upon the fields and trees and hedges
And saw before mine eyes a world reborn,
And on beyond the green world's utmost edges . . .
Where Hope retreated bleeding and forlorn !

Digitized by Google

Ah ! then I knew that Spring would only bring me
Blue skies and songs and flowers drenched with dew !
Ah ! then I knew that Spring could never bring me
The friend I had and, having, lost in you !

April, 1917.

Digitized by Google

RUDOLPHE LOUIS NÈGROZ

LANCE-CORPORAL, WEST YORKS

Con Amore

IF but my love were as my love should be,
And pen a fitting scribe unto my heart,
Even then your praise I could not worthily
In ringing rime chime forth: no earthly art
Could frame the incommunicable worth
That is all yours, purchased with many tears,
And patient bravery, and happiness of earth
Renounced to buy your children's future years.
Then on the little mound your toil made good
Against a merciless tide of circumstance
I'll stand, taking the breath of gratitude
To mind and heart their power to enhance,
That I may reach the ear of future times
And hint my Mother's worth in these poor rimes.

The world must know your greatness, little Mother!
I will not have it so to be confined
That it should dwell but in the heart of my brother,
My sister's and mine own, and in our mind

Digitized by Google

Invoke respect, tongue-tied however just.
O Heart! turn lyre within me! You are stirred
At her great contemplation, then you must
Shake into song, though be it as a bird
Whose artless iteration of his theme
Makes music without skill, by virtue of
The cherished sweetness of the Spring, his dream
Through bitter Winter. Sing but of her love,
  Of her exceeding love, O Heart, then you
  May render somewhat of the debt her due.

So great your love is, Mother, it may be
Nor held by words nor compassed by my rime;
It has o'erwhelmed the wide, disparting sea,
It has assaulted battlemented Time
To keep your guardian spirit round me when
Danger affronted or but lay in lurk—
Danger of death in this mad war of men,
Danger of sin in Life's worse war of work
And play, shadow and light, quick tears, brief joys:
You knew Life's sweetness when you gave me birth
And shared my infant bliss in stingless toys,
Alas! that since then joy has been in dearth
  And grief has loosed so many of those tears
  Which grew your Faith and Love beyond the years.

Digitized by Google

I have been exiled now for two long years,
Known many dangers, many pleasant places;
I have been near to Death just when he rears
With terrible intent, and gazed upon the faces
Of stricken comrades after his dread leap;
In eastern deserts I have worshipped beauty
Austerely still, where Death and Life to sleep,
And Home is a strange dream, and stranger
"Duty";
Yet have your mother-hands reached out always
With some sweet draught for Mem'ry; your
pitying
Softened the couch of hardships; darkest days
Your brightest words did light who knew the sting
Of this cruel war most cruelly deep at heart—
Your love to sing then, what an Angel's art!

Stern War has caused my life's frail barque to ride
Some perilous seas of Death, made me warm friends
With cold Privation, and like Dante's guide,
Down doleful, dayless ways where this life ends
And deeds, desires, are woven in hidden looms
That pattern human fate, me has he led
With hand relentless on my hand. 'Mid tombs
My dragging and his careless feet did tread,
Echoing fear about my heart, and then,
With his contempt content, my hand he freed

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And left me breathing still the air of men
On this sweet earth. Yet in my daily creed
Shall be deep thanks to War that touched my eyes
With sight to see in you my priceless prize.

Return is sweet to one who hath been far
On pilgrimage or war's stern business, and
Hath oft at evening watched the evening star
Beckon to him beyond the desert sand,
Whispering of those green lands of memory's home,
Fertile with bliss that was and is to be,
Until, no more inconstantly to roam
With a sweet pain at heart then voweth he.
But doubly happy in my happiness
Am I who to anticipate made glad
Drear days of trial, and find each cheerful guess
So true, I gained such glad days from such sad :
You are my home, and I find home confirm
The hopes most glad of my sad exile-term.

And yet if I unto my verse would wed
Fair Truth, who stands with grave unfaltering gaze,
Reading where late my labouring pen hath sped
In halting periods o'er my checkered days,
Let me not write so of the present joy
Of my home-coming that one could infer

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A happiness complete, without alloy
Of my sad Knowledge, Wisdom's minister.
Do I not know the bitter tinge to Life
Which Fate hath in your chaliced mother-heart
Mixed with maternal sweetness—the sharp knife
That stabs your peace—the cloud that doth impart
A darkness to each day—a child's affliction,
Bounding your every joy with stern restriction?

True, true it is I know your suffering, dear,
And that my knowledge never can attain
To utter understanding nor come near
With Sympathy your heights of holy pain.
Yet to be comforted you'll not refuse,
Knowing your Mother's heart can mine relieve;
So take this comfort: that your son will use
The gifts you gave him homage due to give
Unto your humble greatness—never pray
For richer boon than grace to sow these seeds
Of future fame, to tell a later day
All the eternal splendour of your deeds.
Thus may I crown a life of little worth
With the rich praise of her who gave me birth.

These gifts you gave on God's behalf, I wonder
How they are mine above all my deserving—
My life's path cluttered is with many a blunder
Nor Duty-guided in a course unswerving,

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As lies your own in beauteous symmetry
Behind, beyond the rise of the distant hill
Where finds the daylight first all that of me
Does make the man, your son, heart, mind and will.
Then how must I, with firm-held reins, with bit
Drawn hard, hold in my spirited arrogance,
The lust of youth, the usufruct of it,
The power impetuous, seeking ever a chance
To break away into loose licence, when
'Tis needed so, to praise you, by my pen!

There is not beauty enough in the whole world—
Could it be brought obedient to my will—
No hues of budding dawn, no colours furled
After rich sunset, in the west, dim, still;
No melodies of brooks or birds, no tunes
Which breezes wake among green leaves that lay
Upon some summer's breathing breast—nor runes
Around a lonely lake which ripples play,
Falling on quiet shores—nor voice of shimmering ocean
Whose anger sleepeth. Nay on all the earth
There is no beauty stirring sweet emotion
To paint, to sing, to monument thy worth:—
Nothing that can outbid in all of this
My pain-fraught joy feeling thy prideful kiss.

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Mother ! toward you my gratitude now goes
As to a goddess of some ancient fane,
Worshipped for fruitful blessings, incense rose,
While the stone altar held the dove just slain
In simple, penitential sacrifice,
And the great congregation, humbled, bowed,
Acknowledged thus the wondrous gifts whose price
They could not pay but in surrender proud
To gratitude's humility.—But you
Claim nothing slain in your cult, except
What I would less than value—all the true,
Enduring things in me have upward leapt,
Striving to do your honour. So do I
In humble pride my voice lift heaven-high.

France, *Sept.*, 1917.

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ARMEL O'CONNOR

PRIVATE, EAST ANGLIAN FIELD AMBULANCE

Violet

I WOULD throw to magnificent doom
White roses at her feet.
Should she tread out the life of each bloom,
What fate could be more sweet?
I would rifle imperial graves
For rings of ancient skill;
I would bring her an army of slaves
Dependent on her will.

I would build her a wonderful home,
The place a Queen to please,
Cedar walls with an ivory dome,
Where she might dwell at ease.
Should she covet the stars or the moon,
Or, yes, the seraphim,
I am sure I should count it a boon
To satisfy her whim.

. . . . . .

But I think of her beautiful face,
Her kind, kind English heart

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With its personal treasures of grace
That have no counterpart.
And I know that she sets not the tasks
Inferior Queens decree.
That I love her, is all that she asks
Of heaven and of me.

PALESTINE, *Aug.* 12, 1917

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DAVID COX McEWEN OSBORNE

LANCE-CORPORAL, 1ST MIDDLESEX

May-Day

WHO loveth whom He chasteneth
Hath smote the earth again
With golden rods of sunshine
And silver rods of rain.

Our little laughing sister
Hath doffed and put away
The black she wore for penance
And white for Easterday.

She binds her hair with cunning
And dons her gown of green
That all the flowers embroider
And all the dews wash clean.

Her golden-throated skylark
That sings and soars so high
With praise and adoration
Perfects the splendid sky.

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David Cox McEwen Osborne

For seed and soul that quicken
By Him have death withstood
Who blessed the whole Creation
And saw that it was good.

Private Claye

(Killed 27th June, 1917)

FROM clay in strength our native oak-tree grows
To height and girth and spread of largest span;
The sweet and crimson riot of the rose;
And wheat, the bread and sacrament of man.
Clay built our homes, and towns of civil folk
Where born were manners, arts and liberty;
Clay are the pipes whence age can blow but smoke,
And children orbs of bliss and vanity.
This is fine clay: our common clay is finer
Which England mine hath modelled not in strife
To strive for England, and the Great Designer
Into the nostrils breathed the breath of life.
Claye, I salute what everlasting fame
Informs thine ancient and illustrious name.

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J. PETERSON

PRIVATE, SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS

Peace

"THERE is no peace, no peace," the big guns shout
To drown the little voice that ev'ry hour,
Persistent as the muezzin from his tower,
Proclaims that all is well.—Yet who shall doubt
The deep-sea thunder in dim moonlit caves,
The green hills singing to the morning sun,
The wild flowers flaunting till the day is done,
Or plaintive sea-gull cries o'er twilit waves?—
"No peace," they growl! The little voice pleads on:
A lark high singing o'er the barrage blast,
A moonbeam on the lake's dark bosom cast,
A whisper from a thousand mouths anon,
"Lo! beauty, beauty may not, cannot cease,
And beauty's thrice-starred crown is peace, is peace."

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Arras

I WENT and walked by Arras
In the dim uncertain night;
I went and walked by Arras
In the dazzling noonday light;
First, I saw a fairy glamour—
Later, 'twas another sight.

Out by Arras in the night-time,
Star-shells in the starlit sky
Showered like wild silver raindrops
From a fountain scattered high,
Like the silver scales of fishes
In the tideway curving by.

Out by Arras in the night-time
There were glints of red and green
Like the glow of fairy camp-fires
In some hidden high wood seen,
Like the day-dawn of the night-land
Where no man has ever been.

Out by Arras in the day-time
There stretched broad the sun-parched sand:

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Where together men and torture
Lived with foul death hand and hand,
Horror-stricken, God-forsaken,
There stretched far the war-cursed land.

And upon the stretches barren
Far I saw the thousands lie
That the wind of war had blasted, –
Sweeping on without a sigh ;
In the hollows, huddled hundreds
Who were not afraid to die.

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"RICHARD RALEIGH"

2ND LIEUT., O. AND B.L.I., FRANCE

A Soldier's Litany

WHEN the foemen's hosts draw nigh,
When the standards wave on high,
When the brazen trumpets call,
Some to triumph, some to fall,
Lord of Hosts, we cry to Thee,
Libera nos Domine!

When the opposing squadrons meet,
When the bullets fall like sleet,
When the vanguards forward dash,
When the flames of cannon flash,
Lord of Hosts, we cry to Thee,
Libera nos Domine!

When mingled in the awful rout,
Vanquished's cries and victor's shout,
Horses' screams and wounded's groan,
Dying, comfortless, alone,
Lord of Hosts, we cry to Thee,
Libera nos Domine!

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And when night's shadows round us close,
God of Battles, succour those,
Those whose hearts shall ever burn
For loved ones, never to return;
Lord of Hosts, we cry to Thee,
Libera nos Domine!
(Save us, Lord.)

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K. M. SCOBIE

2ND LIEUT., R.G.A.

Lunae

HAVE you ridden alone in the country ever
By the dusty light of the harvest-moon?
—Cycled intent in a vain endeavour
To match your speed to your soul's quick tune
When there's never a sound to break the magic;
For the tyres' crisp whir on the powdered road
And the hoot of an owl in the distance, tragic,
Are pricking your heart with a fairy goad?

Then the hawthorn hedges, sweet dissembling,
Stealthily close on your path, till fear
Of their dense bulk looms; and your heartsick
trembling
Shakes into stillness as you swing clear.
Then the high haw-hedges furious will bide,
Drawing back from the light of the moon:
But the black trees haste down the silver hillside.
You know in your heart that you laughed too soon.

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They reach the roadside; and, leaning over,
Wait for your coming. A swerving flash
Through their clutching fingers—then dreaming clover,
And corn amazed at your passing dash
Over the bridge as the water glides black
Darker than death in a dream: then pales.
The enchanted ground from the village slides back.
Voices and lights: and the magic fails.

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R. HOWARD SPRING

CORPORAL, A.S.C., FRANCE

Hic Jacet

UNRECORDED and unsung,
Lay his body in the clay;
Buckler broken, sword unslung,
Done the friendly light of day,
Done the song of birds in May,
Praising life with flame-touched tongue.

Lay his body in the clay;
Sing no song of joy or sorrow;
Fled the dream of yesterday,
Dead the dawning of to-morrow.
He no more will give or borrow
'Mid the dwellers of the day.

Those who knew him may forget him,
Those who never knew remember;
Woman, thou who didst beget him,
And with tenderness beset him,
See him lie amid the clay.
O let him who will, remember!

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Knowledge

TALK not to me of knowledge, I would fain
Wander along life's dewy marge again,
Plucking the flowers a-drip with morning rain.

Within a drop of dew is sphered the world;
All mystery within a rose lies furled;
Tempests within a murmuring shell up-curled.

I sought for knowledge, and the shell is shattered.
I sought for knowledge, and the things that mattered—
The rose leaves and the dew—abroad are scattered.

Talk not to me of knowledge; she would tear
The lily-chalice and let out the rare
Communion wine that God has gathered there.

At Sunset: September, 1917

O LIVING beauty of the dying day!
All the ungathered splendour of the hours
Is folded in your heart, as all the wealth
Of June lies perfect in a crimson rose,

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We who, unheeding, watched the little pools
Of rippling light that underlay the trees,
And saw the clear young arrows shoot the gloom
Of chambers darkly curtain'd with no surprise,
Kneel to the regal miracle which lends
To death the august mystery life forbade.

And now upon these fields are gathered up
In one great blood-red rose of sacrifice
All unremembered buds of love and faith
That shy young lives erst offered Freedom's crowns
And to this fierce consuming altar fire,
That speaks a God-ward world in tongues of flame,
Each spark of heart's devotion lends its strength,
Each candle-point of truth its warmth and light.

The Bells

[In Germany church bells are being melted down for war purposes.]

The Bells:

WHAT have we done
That sacrilegious hands should tear us down
From the high belfry above the little town,
Whence now for fifty years to King and clown
We speak of life and death? What have we done?

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First Bell :

We rang for the coming of souls to earth,
We rang the joy of children's birth ;
We rocked and carolled the young life in,
A holy carol to ward off sin.
Our notes flew over the grey old town
In a helter-skelter, by the wind blown
Higher and higher, and mingled at last
With the songs of souls whose purging is past ;
And then together we and they
To the great Maker of Life would pray
That the life might be blessed that was born that day.

Second Bell :

Sadly we tolled the old life out
That was done with laughter and tears and doubt.
Silverly clear, when the moon sailed by
And the tides of life throbbed stormy and high.
We sang of faith and nerve and thew
To meet the devil and wrestle through.

Third Bell :

We rang of peace and we rang good-will
On the Christ-child's day, so ghostly-still ;
When, dumbed with snow, the village street
No answer made to passing feet.

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Earth stopped her breathing, knowing then
The seed of God sown among men.
We rocked the steeple on Easter day
When Christ the Spirit broke the clay
In glory of yellow daffodils
And holy laughter of dancing rills.

The Bells :

O men who tear us from our place on high
To make us messengers of hate and death,
Thus you uproot the holy lily-flower
And hug a dry and tinkling husk that holds
No spirit essential and no soul of grace.
Thus you tear out the heart from Sharon's rose,
And only thorns remain to make a crown
To lacerate afresh the brow of Christ.
The tower remains, the shell that th' outward eye
May see and reverence as a God's abode.
But O ye happy ones whose inward eye
Not unillumined is, pass by and say :
Here lies the clay inanimate by fire ;
Here stands the empty stall that has no choir ;
Here die the lives from which the God has fled.
Behold ! The Christ steals by with bleeding head.

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J. E. STEWART

M.C., Capt., Border Regiment

Before Action

OVER the down the road goes winding,
A ribbon of white in the corn—
The green, young corn. O, the joy of binding
The sheaves some harvest morn!

But we are called to another reaping,
A harvest that will not wait.
The sheaves will be green. O, the world of weeping
Of those without the gate!

For the road we go they may not travel,
Nor share our harvesting;
But watch and weep. O, to unravel
The riddle of this thing!

Yet over the down the white road leading
Calls; and who lags behind?
Stout are our hearts; but O, the bleeding
Of hearts we may not bind!

Somme, *July*, 1916.

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J. E. Stewart

Renascence

THERE is a stirring in the woods
Has not been heard these many Springs,
A pulsing eagerness as broods
The dawn about awaking things.
And signs are on the little hills
That take the sun while yet on high
The mighty peaks, whose grandeur fills
The noon, are muffled in the sky.

There is a murmur 'neath the noise
Of cities and the common crowd,
As though some elfin under-voice
Sang thro' the buzz and discord loud;
And songs above the red alarms
Of bitter War rise clear and free,
As in the cruel shock of arms
Trembled a sweet expectancy.

Once, in the days of barren Art,
When ebbed the tide of Beauty's pow'r,
Nature bestirred a poet's heart
To give the world a passioned hour;
And such an hour is trembling sure
O'er this our weary day and long,
To bring our sicken'd souls a cure
With a new ministry of Song.

FLANDERS, 1917.

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Courage

I WAS afraid of Fear,
Not of the foe;
And when I thought that those I hold most dear
My craven soul would know
And turn away ashamed, who praised before,
Ashamed and deep distressed to find it so,
I was afraid the more.

Lo, when I joined the fight,
And bared my breast
To all the darts of that wild hellish night,
I, only, stood the test,
For Fear, which I had feared, deserted then,
And forward blithely at the foe I prest
King of myself again.

ENVOY

Blessed be God above
For His sweet care,
Who heard the prayers of those whom most I love
And my poor suppliance there,
Who brought me forth in life and limb all whole,
Who blessed my powers with His divine repair,
And gave me back my soul!

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ERIC FITZWALTER WILKINSON

M.C., Capt., West Yorkshires, B.E.F., France

(Killed in Action, October 9, 1917)

To a Choir of Birds

GREEN are the trees, and green the summer grass,
Beneath the sun, the tiniest leaf hangs still:
The flowers in languor droop, and tired men pass
All somnolent, while death whines loud and shrill.
O fine, full-throated choir invisible,
Whose sudden burst of rapture fills the ear!
Are ye insensible to mortal fear,
That such a stream of melody ye spill,
While murk of battle drifts on Auber's hill,
And mankind dreams of slaughter? What wild glee
Has filled your throbbing throats with sound, until
Its strains are poured from every bush and tree,
And sad hearts swell with hope, and fierce eyes fill?
The world is stark with blood and hate—but ye—
Sing on! Sing on! in careless ecstasy.

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WALTER LIGHTOWLER WILKINSON

LIEUT., 8TH ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS

(Killed on Vimy Ridge, April 9, 1917)

A Lament from the Dead

PEACE! Vex us not: we are Dead,
We are the Dead for England slain.
(O England and the English Spring,
The English Spring, the Spring-tide rain:
Ah, God, dear God, in England now!) . . .
Peace! Vex us not: we are the Dead;
The snows of Death are on our brow:
Peace! Vex us not!

Brothers, the footfalls of the year
(The Maiden month's in England now!) . . .
I feel them pass above my head:
Alas, they echo on my heart!
(Ah, God, dear God, but England now!) . . .
Peace! Vex me not, for I am dead;
The snows of Death are on my brow:
Peace! Vex me not!

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Brothers, and I—I taste again,
Again I taste the Wine of Spring.
(O Wine of Spring and Bread of Love,
O lips that kiss and mouths that sing:
O Love and Spring in England now!) . . .
Peace! Vex me not, but pass above:
Sweet English Love, fleet English Spring—
Pass! Vex me not!

Brothers, my brothers, I pray you—hark!
I hear a song upon the wing,
Upon the silver wing of morn:
It is—dear God! it is the lark—
It is the lark above the corn,
The fledgling corn of England's Spring! . . .
Ah! pity thou my wearied heart:
Cease! Vex me not!

* * *

Brothers, I beg you be at rest,
Be quite at rest for England's sake:
The flowerful hours in England now
Sing low your sleep to English ears:
And would ye have your sorrows wake
The Mother's heart to further tears? . . .
Nay! be at peace, her loyal dead
Sleep! Vex her not!

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The Wayside Burial

THEY'RE bringing in their recent dead—their recent dead !
I see the shoulder badge : a " Southern crush."
How small he looks—(O damn that singing thrush !)
Not give foot five from boots to battered head ! . . .
Give him a kindly burial, my friends,—
So much is due, when some such loyal life ends !
" For Country ! " . . . Ay, and so our brave *do* die :
Comrade unknown, good rest to you !—Good-bye !

They're bringing their recent dead !—No pomp, no show :
A dingy khaki crowd—his friends, his own.
I, too, would like—(God, how that wind does moan !)—
To be laid down by friends : it's sweetest so !
A young life, as I take it ; just a lad—
(How cold it blows ; and that grey sky, how sad !)—
And yet : " For Country "—so a man *should* die :
Comrade unknown, good rest to you !—Good-bye !

They're burying their dead !—I wonder now :
A wife ?—or mother ? Mother it must be—
In some trim home that fronts the English sea.
(A sea-coast country : that the badges show.)

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And she?—I sense her grief, I feel her tears!
"This, then, the garnered harvest of my years!"
And he? . . . "For Country, dear, a man *must* die!"
Comrade unknown, *good* rest to you!—Good-bye!

It's reeded: he is buried! Comrade, sleep!
A wooden cross at your brave head will stand.
A cross of wood? A Calvary!—The Land
For whose sake you laid down sweet life, will keep
Watch, lad, and ward that none may bring to shame.
That Name for which you died! . . . "What's in a name"?—
England shall answer! *You* will hear Her cry:
"Well done, my own! my son—good rest: Good-bye!"

B.E.F., France, 4.3.17.

At Last Post

COME home!—Come home!
The winds are at rest in the restful trees;
At rest are the waves of the sundown seas;
And home—they're home—
The wearied hearts and the broken lives—
At home! At ease!

B.E.F., France.

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Night in War Time

NIGHT and night's menace: Death hath forged a dart
Of every moment's pause and stealthy pass:
Blind Terror reigns: darkly, as in a glass,
Man's wondering Soul beholds his fearful Heart,
And questions, and is shaken: and, apart,
Light Chance, the harlot-goddess, holding Mass,
Scatters her favours broadcast on the grass
As might a drunkard spill his wares in mart!

Time and sweet Order have forsaken men,
So near Eternal seems the Night's foul sway:
We ask of Life: "Has Chaos come again,
With Ruin, and Confusion, and Decay?"
Yet slowly, surely darkness dies: and then,
Out of the deep night's menace, dawns the Day!

B.E.F., FRANCE, *January 25th*, 1917.

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